

If the manufacturer 1 does not carry inventory either, back order procedures are carried out in Step S53 and the order receipt information is updated.

5 ● Collection processing

FIG. 12 is a flowchart showing an example of collection processing based on the order receipt information received from the terminal 41 of the user. The processes of the steps in the flowchart of FIG. 12 are carried out as the CPU 1501 executes processes based on the program code stored in the main storage or auxiliary storage of the main server 81.

The expediter who delivers toner cartridges references the collection flag in the order receipt information. If the collection flag is on, used toner cartridges are collected at the time of delivery. The expediter accesses the main server 81 using the mobile terminal 62 (S61 and S62), and sends delivery information and collection information associated with the order receipt information (S63). The collection information contains the model numbers and quantities of the collected toner cartridges associated with the collection date and order receipt information.

The expediter (deliveryman) references the collection flag as described above by viewing information displayed on the display unit of his/her portable terminal. The information displayed on the display unit is supplied by

being sent from the main server 81 in FIG. 3 to the portable terminal of the expediter.

The information displayed on the portable terminal of the expediter is based on user information that contains
5 at least order quantity, desired delivery time, and flag information as to whether to use the collection service, which have been entered via a user interface (FIG. 6 or 9) according to user operation.

When the user information contains information about
10 desired delivery time and flag information as to whether to use the collection service, the main server 81 can easily let the expediter know on the day of the delivery whether the user wants collection, by sending the display screen information to the expediter (distribution ID) identified
15 by referring to the DB 8, in sync with the desired delivery time of the user. In addition to the approach in which the main server 81 sends the user information to the portable terminal of the expediter, the present invention can also adopt an approach in which the main server 81 sends the user
20 information once to a distribution control computer which controls distribution and then the distribution control computer sends it to the portable terminal of the expediter. The distribution control computer here corresponds to a computer installed at the headquarters of the delivery
25 agent or the terminal of the seller.

On the other hand, apart from the transmission of the user information to the expediter, when toner cartridges

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are sold, the main server 81 generates a shipping/collection number (ticket number) using the same number as the order receipt number issued in advance.

FIG. 20 shows how shipping/collection numbers are stored/managed in the DB 8. As shown in FIG. 20, the stored/managed data include shipping/collection number, product name, product number, delivery date, collection flag, expected collection date, collection date, Collection Completed flag, and other information for each user ID.

The first four digits (e.g., "AA01") in the shipping/collection numbers ("AA01-1" to "AA01-3") vary with the order, meaning that "AA01" and "AA02" belong to different orders. The last digit ("1" to "3" in "AA01-1" to "AA01-3") identifies a product. The use of the shipping/collection number saves labor at the time of collection, for example, sparing the user the trouble of issuing a new ticket and the expediter the trouble of data entry, as described above. Also, since shipment and collection are managed by the same ticket number or the like, the collection rate for each user can be managed easily, and so forth.

The setting of the collection flag is based on the user's intension as to whether to use the collection service specified for each product via the user interface shown in FIG. 18. If the intention as to whether to use the collection service has been specified via the user